



## Appareil

4 | 2010

Biopolitique, éthique et subjectivation, questions de modernité

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### Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/appareil/1137>

DOI: 10.4000/appareil.1137

ISSN: 2101-0714

### Publisher

MSH Paris Nord

### Electronic reference

Joyce C. H. Liu, « The Count of Psyche : The birth of bio-politics and bio-ethics in early modern China », *Appareil* [Online], 4 | 2010, Online since 29 January 2010, connection on 20 April 2019. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/appareil/1137> ; DOI : 10.4000/appareil.1137

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# The Count of Psyche : The birth of bio-politics and bio-ethics in early modern China

Joyce C. H. Liu

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[*Vitalpolitik* is] “a policy of life, which is not essentially orientated to increased earnings and reduced hours of work, like traditional social policy, but which takes cognizance of the worker’s whole vital situation, his real, concrete situation, from morning to night and from night to morning,” material and moral hygiene, the sense of property, the sense of social integration, etcetera, being in his view as important as earnings and hours of work.

Rüstow, quoted by F. Bilger, *La Pensée économique libérale*, p. 106; re-quoted by Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*. p. 157n.

Political economy ... is not a system for controlling men’s actions, but for discovering *how men are induced by their natural propensities to act*.

John Hill Burton’s Chambers’s Educational Course: Political Economy for Use in Schools, and for Private Instruction, p. 49, emphasis mine.

- 1 This essay examines the complicit hidden ties between the rise of liberalist economic subject and the discursive mode of domination of bio-ethical life in modern China. In late nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, there emerged a wide spread nexus of discourse related to the formulation of a powerful psyche-force of the new people for modern China. This mode of discursive formulation presents on the one hand the psyche that is an autonomous and free agent in the line of production for the individual’s own interest, while at the same time the psyche force is described as a

countable, calculable, correctable, controllable and utilizable moral force or capital for the interest of the nation and the coming civil society. The individual at this converging point both as the liberalist political economic agent and as the ethical-calculable nationalist moral subject is then placed within the nationalist project of cultivation, training and correction. The aim of this essay is to answer the question why, in the Chinese context historically and culturally, the modern subject is so prone to the domination of the nationalist sentiments. I would like to argue that, long before the May Fourth intellectuals' efforts to awake the enlightenment movement in the 1919, the mode of a governable and calculable modern subject had been established through the revolutionary intellectuals' discursive responses to the contemporary world. It is what I called the moments of the birth of ethical-bio-politics in early modern China. In order to probe effectively into the complexity of this issue, I need to first run through the main argument in Foucault's book *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1979*. I consider Foucault's lectures of this year a significant link to his later lectures on the ethical subject and the hermeneutics of subject that point to the ambiguous problems of bio-politics of today.

## 1. The crossroads of political economy and the rise of new civil society

- 2 In Foucault's lectures during 1978-1979 on the birth of biopolitics, the double movement of the mechanism of liberalist political economic is closely studied and localized: on the one hand, it relies on the individual's volunteering and autonomous commitment with his free will to work and to exercise his potential; on the other hand, it takes the entire life of the individual, including the physical and moral hygiene, into account for the management and production for the enterprise. According to Foucault, starting from the eighteenth century, there is the attempt in the discourse of political economy to rationalize the problems posed to governmental practice by phenomena characteristic of a set of living beings forming a population. Foucault takes liberalism as a principle and method of the rationalization of the exercise of government, a rationalization that obeys "the internal rule of maximum economy." (Foucault 2008: 318) Even though liberal thought starts from the civil society instead of the state, the question behind it is how to govern. In this line of thought, government becomes necessary and the justification of its existence defines the ends it pursues with regard to the particular society. The technology of a particular government and its forms of schematization is actually derived from the rationalization of the composition of that society. When the logic of political economy is superimposed on the logic of social governmentality, it gives rise to what Foucault called the "birth of biopolitics."
- 3 The intriguing problem about the liberalist economic subject or the economic man, *homo oeconomicus*, is that, although it is let alone to do his own work in the economic system, following the principle of *laissez-faire*, his is "eminently governable." (Foucault 2008: 270) The individual would pursue his own interest, but his interest has already been posited in the way that it would converge spontaneously with the interest of others. *Homo oeconomicus*, according to Foucault, is actually the person "who accepts reality" and therefore "someone manageable, someone who responds systematically to systematic modifications artificially introduced into the environment," and consequently "the correlate of a governmentality." (Foucault 2008: 270-271) The paradox of the liberalist

economic man Foucault presents in his studies points to the fact that, instead of an atom of freedom, the *home oeconomicus* is already a certain type of subject who precisely enable an art of government to be determined according to the principle of economy. This problem of *home oeconomicus* leads Foucault to reconsider the concept of subject introduced by English empiricism, that is, a subject not defined by his freedom, or by the opposition of body and soul, or by the presence of something marked by the Fall or sin, but a form of subject of individual choices which are both irreducible and non-transferable. This irreducible and non-transferable point is the “regressive end point” of the rationality, judgment, reasoning, or calculation of the individual choices and is referred to the subject himself as “interest.” This “subject of interest,” whether it is related to self-preservation or to sympathy, is primarily based on “subjective will.” Even though subjected and constrained by the contract, the “subject of interest” remains, subsists and continues up to the time of the juridical contract and overflows the “subject of right.” (Foucault 2008: 272-274)

- 4 The different logic governing the subject of interest and the subject of right is that the subject of right is by definition a split subject who acknowledges some natural and immediate rights but also agrees to the principle of self-renunciation, as what law and the prohibition function in the juridical system, but the subject of interest, according to the economists, never has to relinquish his interest. Foucault points out that in the eighteenth century, the figure of *home oeconomicus* and the figure of *homo juridicus* or *homo legalis* are heterogeneous and cannot be superimposed on each other. Foucault refers to Adam Smith’s *The Wealth of Nations* and stressed the importance of the “invisibility” of the hand of the “totality” which eludes the individual while at the same time founds the rationality of his egoistic choices and, Foucault adds, “if the totality of the process eludes each economic man, there is however a point where the whole is completely transparent to a sort of gaze of someone whose invisible hand, following the logic of this gaze and what it sees, draws together the threads of all these dispersed interest.” The invisibility of the collective good is essential to the process because the collective good “must not be an objective” and “cannot not be calculated.” (Foucault 2008: 278-280) No economic agent or political agent should or could account for the totality of the process of the collective good. Foucault writes:

Thus the economic world is naturally opaque and naturally non-totalizable. It is originally and definitively constituted from a multiplicity of points of view which is all the more irreducible as this same multiplicity assures their ultimate and spontaneous convergence. Economics is an atheistic discipline; economics is a discipline without God; economics is a discipline without totality; economics is a discipline that begins to demonstrate not only the pointlessness, but also the impossibility of a sovereign point of view over the totality of the state that he has to govern. Economics steals away from the juridical form of the sovereign exercising sovereignty within a state precisely that which is emerging as the essential element of a society’s life, namely economic processes. Liberalism acquired its modern shape precisely with the formulation of this essential incompatibility between the non-totalizable multiplicity of economic subjects of interest and the totalizing unity of the juridical sovereign. (Foucault 2008: 282, emphasis mine)

- 5 To Foucault, the heterogeneity and incompatibility of the economic world and the political-juridical world of the eighteenth century could serve as a critique of governmental reason. The basic function of Adam Smith’s theory of the invisible hand is to disqualify the political sovereign. But, throughout the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, different forms of socialism, state socialism and the state-controlled economy,

all tried to work out some kind of definition of the economic sovereignty. The principle of *laissez-faire* in the physiocrats, for example, is to establish the correspondence between the sovereign and the economic processes or the economic agents, basing on the evidence and the Economic Table they constructed. It is here, Foucault says, that we find the idea that “economic agents must be allowed their freedom” and that “a political sovereignty will cover the totality of the economic process with a gaze in the uniform light, as it were, of evidence.” (Foucault 2008: 285-286)

- 6 What Foucault offers is a very complex picture of the intersection and crossroad of the political economic and the political governmentality. According to Foucault, Adam Smith’s theory from the start was not meant to serve as governmentality rationality. “Economic science cannot be the science of government and economics cannot be the internal principle, law, rule of conduct, or rationality of government.” (Foucault 2008: 286) But, when the two incompatible worlds collate and superimposed on one another, the questions arises: how is the theory of the invisible hand served as the governmental rationality? How is the theory of civil society served as the converging point of political economic and governmentality rationality? The governability or governmentability of the economic subject is made possible through a “new ensemble” which makes him both subject of right and subject of economic agents, and this convergence brings in what Foucault calls “the liberal art of governing,” the field where such liberalist governmentality could exercise is “civil society.” (Foucault 2008: 294-295)
- 7 Here is the crucial question that Foucault proposes in his seminar, and it is also the central concern of my current study: what is the rationality and the technology to govern, according to the rule of right, the civil society, a space of sovereignty which is inhabited by economic subject? Foucault points out that civil society is not a philosophical idea, but a concept of governmental technology, and the problem of civil society is “the juridical structure of a governmentality pegged to the economic structure.” Foucault writes:

And I think that civil society—which is very quickly called society, and which at the end of the eighteenth century is called the nation—makes a self-limitation possible for governmental practice and an art of government, for reflection on this art of government and so for a governmental technology. ... An omnipresent government, a government which nothing escapes, a government which conforms to the rules of right, and a government which nevertheless respects the specificity of the economy, will be a government that manages civil society, the nation, society, the social. (Foucault 2008: 296)
- 8 How should the subject be managed so that he can be left alone, *laissez-faire*, and work for his own interest while the whole nation or the civil society can benefit according to the rationality of the government? The omnipresent government is built upon these autonomous economic subjects. “*Homo oeconomicus* is, if you like, the abstract, ideal, purely economic point that inhabits the dense, full, and complex reality of civil society. Or, alternatively, civil society is the concrete ensemble within which these ideal points, economic men, must be placed so that they can be appropriately managed.” (Foucault 2008: 296) It is in this same ensemble of the technology of liberal governmentality that *homo oeconomicus* and civil society belong.
- 9 The irony is clear here. The civil society invoked to resist against the government or the state, the state apparatuses or institutions, turns out to be the very thing that forms part of modern governmental technology. Foucault demonstrates how Adam Smith’s economic analysis is transformed in Furgerson’s text as the theories of civil society, combining

Smith's concept of nation, including viewing civil society as an historical-natural constant, with spontaneous synthesis of individuals, a permanent matrix of political power and that it constitutes the "motor of history." The civil society or the nation is the motor of history precisely because it is not only the spontaneous synthesis and subordination but it also carries the element of dissociation, that is, the egoism of *homo oeconomicus*. The multiplications and modifications of the blind initiatives of the egoist interests and individual calculations are infinite, and the transformation of civil society is endless. This never-ending generation of history makes the formation of new social fabric possible. Also, civil society calls for a government as an organic component of the social bond as an organic feature of the form of authority. These characteristics make the civil society in Furguson's text very different from that of Hobbes, Rousseau and Montesquieu because the economic problems are introduced into new technologies of government. (Foucault 2008: 298-308)

- 10 The crossroads Foucault analyzes in Furguson's text reveal a domain opening up of collective and political units which go beyond the purely economic bond, and yet without being purely juridical, and that this space cannot be superimposed on the structures of the contract and the game of rights. But, the demand for a new form of civil society gives rise to new forms of sovereign individuality basing on the strategy of interests of the individual sovereign, and to new forms of truth that is manifested through the rationality of history. Just as what Foucault points out, since the sixteen and seventeenth century in the West, the exercise of power has been adjusted according to calculation of force, relations, wealth and factors of strength. Rationality becomes the foundation of modern forms of governmental technology. Different forms of rationality, the rationality of the sovereign state, of economic agents, of the governed, speak about different ways of calculating and regulating the art of government. The principle of rationality of the nationalist and statist politics as well as the rationality of the truth regime continue in spite of the transformations of the technologies of governmentality. The birth of the new forms of calculation and regulation of the civil society or the nationalist state in the twentieth century, ways of governing the population, including health, hygiene, birth, race, and so on, is founded precisely through the long process of the discourse of political economy since mid-eighteenth century down to the nineteenth century.
- 11 To me, the problem lies more in how in such crossroads and intersections, with the cleaving up and opening of new space for civil society, even though the juridical system and economic bond has not been established yet, the discursive modes of new ways of calculation and regulation has already infiltrated in the same texts. The crucial question is: how the individual in the society, a society in the making, a society that is invoked to rebel against the present government, is accounted for the rise either of a new civil society or a new nation state, and through what irreducible rationality and reasoning these individuals are posited. The texts that I would like to examine in this current essay point to what I called the moments of the birth of ethical-bio-politics in modern China. I would like to argue that, in late Qing China, at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, on the eve of the republic's revolution, and twenty years before the May Fourth Enlightenment Movement, the emerging new mode of discourse on the "count" of psyche among the intellectuals gives rise to the rationality of psyche ruling for later governments. With the borrowed Western knowledge of modern physics and chemistry on the one hand, and the theories of political economy and the civil society/nation state on the other hand, Chinese intellectuals, through the aids of the

missionaries in China and the translated texts from Japan, build up a mode of hermeneutics on psyche that stresses on the countable, utilizable, controllable, accumulative, and correctable nature of psyche. Psyche force was described as the force, using the metaphor of electricity, to be tamed and directed so that it can serve the aims of the State. Moreover, the individual's psyche force was accounted as part of the national capital and as a share that is responsible for the production of the national interest, in Benthamian reasoning. Liang Qichao's essay on the "New People" was an exemplary text that demonstrated how the ethical subject was constructed in the way that the *bio* (life) and the ethics of the individuals were discursively formulated in an ethico-political-economic to contribute to the collective good defined in the name of nation.

## 2. Liang Qichao and the ethical-political economy for the new people

- 12 Liang Qichao was the most prominent revolutionary intellectual among those who welcomed and elaborated the rejuvenated China through the rejuvenated psyche power of the citizen of a coming society in late Qing China. Liang Qichao fled to Japan with his teacher Kang Youwei after the failure of the short-lived Hundred Days' Reform in 1898, and stayed abroad in exile for 15 years. During this period of exile, he studied Western knowledge extensively through Chinese translations as well as Japanese translations, and he reintroduced them into Chinese in new forms embedded with his erudite knowledge of classical Chinese texts. His enormous amount of writings greatly influenced the path of Chinese modernization.
- 13 To reform and build a modern China, Liang Qichao places his hope not in the leader but in the people. Liang develops his idea of the capacity and the rights of people in his seminal book *On the New People* (*xinminshuo*, 新民說 1902) as the foundation for a strong nation-state. He stresses that, to resist the expanding forces of the national imperialism of the foreign nations, the only method to take was through reinforcing the people's own sense of nationalism. (Liang, *On the New People* 657) He uses the analogy of biological body to compare with the State: the State is composed with its people, as if a body is composed with its limbs, intestines, nerves and veins. If the parts and limbs were weak, diseased or even broken, the body could not maintain its proper condition and would even perish. The same case could be applied to the State. If we wanted the State to be strong and wealthy, Liang suggests, we first had to consider the ways to maintain the nutrition and life of the State by ways of cultivating its new people. (Liang, *On the New People* 655) Liang Qichao, commenting on Rousseau, emphasizes the importance of the public opinion and the juridical contract, in addition to the physiological vision of the state, as the foundation for the operation of the nation. On top of the physiological formulation of the juridical and contractual relation between the individual and the State, Liang Qichao situates the ethical position of the individual in the mode of economic production. Liang lists and elaborates the meaning of each of the moral virtues, so called common virtues (*gongde*), the aim of which, to Liang Qichao, are to lead to the people's political ability of *qun*, being a social member, and to enhance the interest of the society (*liqun* 利群): to consolidate the group, improve the group and make it progress. The common virtues are indispensable in Liang's portrayal of a new society, such as responsibility, autonomous self-governing, self-esteem, bravery, endurance, advantageousness, progressiveness, aggressiveness, cooperativeness. In between the lines, Liang brings in various classical



Chinese Confucian texts to reinforce the concepts of the virtues so that his Chinese readers can appreciate right away his reasoning, and the texts he cites includes not only the four classics, *Analects of Confucius*, *Mencius*, *Great Learning*, *Doctrine of the Mean*, but also *Spring and Autumn Annals*, *Mozi*, *Xun Zi*, *Liezi*, and *Zhan Guo Ce* (strategies of the Warring States). (Liang, *On the New People*, pp. 656, 657, 661, 691, 705, 712) There is an obvious move toward a positive, aggressive, warring and martial interpretation of Confucianism in Liang's selection of those classical texts.

- 14 How does Liang define the social, *qun*? How does he define the interest of the society, *liqun*? “Qun” in Chinese stands for the social, the group or society, and “Li” stands for “interest.” Liang clearly defined the capacity for *qun*, being a social member, as the demarcation that differentiates the human from the beast. He says that if a society cannot be formed among the people, then humanity could barely exist. The best form of society that suited the people, Liang suggests, is nation-state (*guojia*). Due to the differences of languages, customs, thoughts, laws and institutions, it's necessary and natural for people to establish their own nation-state. Nation-state is the proper group established for the people to deal with foreign groups. The people should fight for and protect their nation-state till the last minute, even to the extent of sacrificing their own lives, so that the sovereignty of their nation-state would not be endangered. (Liang, *On the New People*, 663) Liang Qichao denounces the utopian notion of the universe as the existential frame for human beings and insists that if there were no nations-state, then there would be no competition among one another, and hence no progress of civilization. Furthermore, he stresses, if the boundaries among nations-states disappeared, then the human gatherings would regress into the tribal conditions. It would then be what Liang calls the barbarian or even savage states. People would remain in a savage or barbarous state if they could not form a nation-state. Therefore, the nation-state is considered as the best evolved form that is suitable as human society and as the convergence of self-love and benevolence. (Liang, *On the New People*, 663)
- 15 What then is the role of “interest” in Liang's formulation of the “new people” in such evolutionist vision of the State? Liang Qichao encourages people not only to fight for their “self-interest” but also to aim at the “real self-interest” (*zhenliji*). So-called “real self-interest” is defined in terms of the nation-state. One has to nourish the thoughts of interest of society, that is, the nation-state, so that they can forever secure their own interests. Liang Qichao even analyzes the modes of production according to the interest of the nation-state and specifies that ducation and cultivation are necessary methods to strengthen the nation-state. Liang compares the State as a corporation, and the imperial court as the business office. In order to produce and maintain the interests (「生利」) of the nation-state, it is necessary to demand the force of production from the people. Liang defines the forces of production as physical force and psyche force (*xinli* 心力), the later involved the intellectual force (*zhili* 智力) and the moral force (*deli* 德力). He insists that the prosperity or the fall of a nation-state depends on its capacity for production and its total capital and total labor. (Liang, *On the New People*, 696) To make sure that the people take production as the individual's responsibility, he stresses that people should be educated so that they would even feel “ashamed” for being only the one who shared the interests but not the one who produced them. (Liang, *On the New People*, 702) In his formulation, not only physical productivity but also intellectual as well as moral productivity are counted in the line of production. Everyone in the nation is considered as a member in the system of the production machine. Education entered into scene of



the production system under this reasoning and calculation so as to secure the optimal interest of the nation and to build up the people's "psyche force," that is, their intellectual and moral capacities. (Liang, *On the New People*, 732-733)

- 16 What is striking in Liang's text, to my mind, is that his mode of argumentation perfectly represents a typical type of intellectual syncretism in late nineteenth century Japan and China. In the texts of this period of time, different disciplinary textbooks, social theories or public forums are all embedded with the views of the eighteenth and the nineteenth Western thoughts views, especially those of Adam Smith, Herbert Spencer and Jeremy Bentham and so on. Liang demonstrates a representative case in which we see that he incorporates and conflates the political, the physiological, the economic and the ethical laterals into the count of the individual, and he further entrusts the individual, in asserting the rationale of the liberalist's principle of *laissez faire*, the responsibility of the management of his own personal virtues and his forms of life, or *bios*, in order to contribute his share as a part of the national capital. Liang Qichao's project of moral revolution lays the ground for his sketch of the new people and the new subject of modern China.
- 17 Throughout his argumentation for the new people project, Liang Qichao inserts here and there his passionate and poignant lamentations. "Alas, alas, how can we not fear and alarmed!" "It is painful and mournful for us not to have our nation to protect us, just as the orphans without their parents to cling to." "Horror! Horror! I could not see how our nation could stand on its own feet." "I'm deeply ashamed to see our current situation." "I'm all tearful when I observe the current conditions of our nation." "Our young people are all so fragile that I do not see even a solid society form by a hundred people. Our nation is coming to its end!" (Liang, *On the New People*, 657, 664, 665, 666-667, 672, 693, 701-702, 706)
- 18 Such strong emotional exclamations, including his identification of the situation to be ashamed of, feared, worried and alarmed, as well as his rhetoric of the parent-children metaphor, the cutting line between the beast and the human, the imminent danger of the nation-state, all reinforce the legitimacy of his argumentations for the ethico-political economy for the individual in society. The free competition of the liberal economy in the framework of the autonomous consensus with the nation-state-community therefore is at work for the new national subject of the modern China.

### 3. The count of psyche in the east Asian neo-Confucian context

- 19 The way that psyche or the force of psyche (*xinli* 心力) is presented as capable of being counted, calculated, regulated, governed, utilized in order to serve as the production force for the benefit of the nation is a popular notion in late nineteenth and early twentieth century China. One exemplary text is Liang Qichao's "On the New People." The direct source of Liang Qichao's use of *xinli* in that book is from a little book *Zhixin mianbingfa* (治心免病法) [*A method for the avoidance of illness by controlling the mind*] published in Shanghai in 1896, a translation by John Fryer (傅蘭雅 1839-1928) basing on Henry Wood's *Ideal Suggestion through Mental Photograph*. In this book, John Fryer translates several different ideas of the power or the procedure of thought as *xinli* (心力), and employs the notion of ether and electricity as metaphors to explain the power of

thought in operation. According to him, the force of thought is like electricity, transmittable through “ether,” and can be tamed, utilized and harnessed for utility as long as we learn the laws that govern the force of thought. The phrase “zhixin” (治心) used by John Fryer in the title of his translation and throughout his book conveys explicitly the meaning of “mind-cure” and “mind-governmentality,” both ideas highly welcomed by late Qing intellectuals.

- 20 It is significant to note that at this point the Christianized New Thought Movement popular in the United State starting from mid-nineteenth century was introduced into Chinese through John Fryer’s translation. The author of this book Henry Wood is considered as one of the precursors of the New Thought Movement. The advocates for the New Thought Movement present it as a science to promote the ideas that thought is power, and that positive thinking and thought control could fundamentally correct people’s mode of thinking, but underneath it, according to William James in *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, it is actually a religious-oriented movement. (William James, 83-84, 93-94) Wood’s method of mental therapy works particularly on the rhetoric of mental hygiene. In his argumentation, mental hygiene for the healthy mind is as important as the physical hygiene for the healthy body. Passivity, pessimism, hesitation, doubtfulness, weakness and gloominess all were regarded as vile forms of mind. Negative thoughts were untouchable, and negative feelings were even worse. The body’s negative or decadent behaviors must be corrected because they indicate the degenerate state of the mind. Consequently, the mind had to be exposed, monitored, controlled, educated and modified so that it could be improved and evolved into a better state. This mode of psyche governmentality resonated very well with the eagerness of the late Qing intellectuals who were trying very hard to seek a new path for the modern China.
- 21 Liang’s using the term *xinli*, the force of psyche, as the instrument to accumulate, combine, unite, consolidate, strengthen and expand the forces of the people, and his comparison of the nation state as a corporation, and the imperial court as the business office, clearly demonstrates the reasoning of liberalist political economy. The source for Qiang Qichao’s knowledge of political economy is another influential text translated by John Fryer and was read and studied by Liang Qichao under his mentor Kang Youwei, that is, John Hill Burton’s *Chambers’s Educational Course: Political Economy for Use in Schools, and for Private Instruction* (abbreviated as *Political Economy*), one of the educational textbook series published by the Edingburgh W. & R. Chambers. In Burton’s *Political Economy* we see a clear line of argument that follows the liberalist and Benthamian utilitarian reasoning of self interest, free competition, as well as labor division and cooperation for the optimal benefit. Burton’s *Political Economy* was translated into East Asian languages not only by John Fryer into Chinese as *Zuozhi Chuyan* (《佐治蜀言》) in 1886, but also was translated into Japanese by Fukusawa Yukichi (福澤諭吉) as *Seiyo Jijo* (*Things Western*, 西洋事情) during 1867-1870, and into Korean by Yu Gil-jun (유길준, 俞吉濬, 1856-1914) in 1895.
- 22 The famous *Bunmeiron no Gairyaku* (*Outline of a theory of civilization*, 文明論概略) (1875) by Fukusawa Yukichi already demonstrates the characteristic features of the political economical reasoning of his time. Firstly, Fukusawa Yukichi differentiates civilization with barbarianism basing on the national subjects’ intellect and spiritual forces (46-49). Secondly, he suggests that the sum of the opinions and intellect of the whole nation could show the possibility for revolution or transformation of the society. Consequently he proposes to use statistic calculation of population, price, wages, marriage, birth rate, disease and death so that the prosperity and decline of a nation’s civilization could be

measured (Fukusawa Yukichi 59-72). Thirdly, Fukusawa Yukichi believes that the wealth of the nation should be dominated by the will of the nation, and the intellect of the nation should accumulate the wealth of the nation according to the will of the nation (Fukusawa Yukichi 159-167). Fukusawa Yukichi's arguments clearly demonstrate the political economic reasoning of the link between the nation's wealth and the management of its people's production forces.

- 23 Fukusawa Yukichi's knowledge of political economy started in his translation of Burton's *Political Economy* in 1867, and his teaching of political economy at the same time. He translated only the first one-third of Burton's book and left the practical aspects of trade and international commerce aside. The reason that Fukusawa Yukichi did not translate the entire book apparently was because he did not think it was necessary to retranslate similar texts that were available in Japanese translations. Nevertheless, it was also because, according to Paul B. Trescott, that he was attracted by the moral aspect of this section that was close to the Confucian idea of natural order, family relations, human relations, as well as the right and responsibility of the individuals. (Trescott 485) Trescott also pointed out that Burton's textbook was one of the large corpuses of textbooks for schools that flourished in the context of the Scottish enlightenment, many of them were written by Richard Whately (1787-1863), whose style of writing Burton closely resembles. (Trescott 496-7) Liang Taigen in discussing Burton's *Political Economy* as the common text in the East Asian context, pointed out that Yu Gil-jun's book on his foreign learning (서유견문, 西遊見聞) was highly influenced by Burton's *Political Economy* through Fukusawa Yukichi's *Things Western* and *Outline of a theory of civilization*, and that Yu Gil-jun was the first Korean intellectual who introduced the social evolutionist theories and the concept of enlightenment and civilization (Gaehwa 開化), as well as Edward Sylvester Morse's (1838-1925) evolutionist theories, into Korea. (Liang Taigen 323-351)
- 24 It is significant for scholars such as Trescott and Liang Taigen to observe the reception and circulation of Burton's book on political economy in the East Asian regions. However, either in Trescott's emphasis on the moral dimension in Fukusawa Yukichi's writings, or in Taigen's emphasis on the evolutionist version of enlightenment and civilization, the role political economy played in the process of ethical subjectivation was overlooked. In Burton's text, the free and autonomous economic agent is crucial in the entire system of the political economy. He writes:

Political economy ... is not a system for controlling men's actions, but for discovering *how men are induced by their natural propensities to act*: it has not so much influence in teaching men how to direct each other, as in teaching them the cases in which control is useless or mischievous. (49, emphasis mine)
- 25 The issue of government is not in its control, but in its capacity to induce the capacity or the appetite in each individual, be it intellectual or moral, so that the agent is freely and autonomously willing to offer his service for the larger community. When the logic of the political economy is superimposed and incorporated into the logic of ethical economy, the individual's intellectual state and moral state are counted as part of the productive capacity according to the national interest or the collective good defined by the state; likewise, the ethical and economic subject, or the national subject, is placed in the measurement of the line of production.

## 4. Political economy and the ethical subject intertwined in the knot

- 26 The ethical subject formulated by Liang Qichao is a subject of truth prescribed to fit the best interest of the state and is defined by the physiology of the state. Furthermore, this physiological structure of the state treats the human psyche as the object of its governmentality with the logic of political economy. The true subject, or rather, the true ethico-economic subject in Liang's vision, is the man as a little machine, as the human capital, both as the subject and as the object in the ethico-economic regimes, expected to join the line of production. Tuned with such liberalist vision of the society, the principle of the least government with the maximum effect is demanded. That is, as Foucault pointed out, the core factor in this management was the mechanism of the formation of truth basing on the *raison d'État*. Foucault wrote: "[Instead of] continuing to saturate this site of the formation of truth with an unlimited regulatory governmentality, it is recognized — and this is where the shift takes place — that it must be left to function with the least possible intervention precisely so that it can both formulate its truth and propose it to governmental practice as rule and norm." Foucault added that the site of truth is not in "the heads of economists," but is "the market." (Foucault 2008: 29-30)
- 27 What is the market for the state? Foucault points out that it is nothing else except for the site of justice, of values, of price, and of veridiction. The useful and the utilizable turn out to be veridical and desirable. Through the sense of interest, the government can hold on everything that exists for it, "in the form of individuals, actions, words, wealth, resources, property, rights and so forth" (Foucault 2008: 45). The entire strategy of governmentality therefore relies not on the total control but on the law of life, that is, the rules for a game, "in which each remains master regarding himself and his part, then the judicial, instead of being reduced to the simple function of applying the law, acquires a new autonomy and importance" (Foucault 2008: 175). The autonomy of the individual therefore is essential in the self-governmentality of the regime of ethics as well as the regime of truth. To analyze the mechanism of this regime, Foucault suggests, we do not need to analyze the historical logic of processes, but should undertake instead the analysis of the "internal rationality" or the "wage" of individuals' activity. The wage, or the income, reconsidered in this context, is the capital or, as Irving Fisher points out, the source of future income (Foucault 2008: 223-230).
- 28 Liang's entire project for the new people is certainly based on such type of the molding and shaping, through cultivation and education, of the people into the ethical-economic subject of the modern China. The individual in this economic and political framework is then viewed not merely as human labor but as the source of future income, as an earning machine or the human capital. The formation of the human capital into effective productive machine is the *telos* of governmentality and of educational investments. The fundamental reasoning in this logic, the "regressive end point" in the analysis, as Foucault phrased, is the calculation of the "painful or non-painful nature" of the situation (Foucault 2008: 272). Liang's repeated emphasis of the threat of the invasion by the foreign countries had already successfully depicted a picture of danger. The self-interest and self-preservation, viewed with the interest and preservation of the nation, is the anchorage for subjective will and action. Partaking in the act of the production /

preservation in the name of national interest then is rationalized as a moral imperative for the new ethical subject.

- 29 The difficult question Foucault posed for us in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* on the problem of the ethical subject is: “Am I really the ethical subject of the truth I know?” (Foucault 2005: 487) The subject constituted by the form of reflexivity specific to certain type of care of the self, the mastery of *tekhne* over *bios*, according to Foucault, is the ethical subject of truth appears and is experienced. However, this ethical subject thus appeared and experienced has been formed through the knowledge, education and the particular *tekhne* over *bios* at different moments in history. Foucault writes:

Although the theory of political power as an institution usually refers to a juridical conception of the subject of right, it seems to me that the analysis of governmentality—that is to say, of power as a set of reversible relationships—must refer to an ethics of the subject defined by the relationship of self to self. Quite simply, this means that in the type of analysis I have been trying to advance for some time you can see that power relations, governmentality, the government of the self and of others, and the relationship of self to self constitute a chain, a thread, and I think it is around these notions that we should be able to connect together the question of politics and the question of ethics. (Foucault 2005: 252)

- 30 The question arises exactly when the logic of ethics was superimposed with other logics and other telos, be it the religious supreme imperatives, or the political common good for the nation-state, or the economic interest of the entrepreneurs. The problem of ethics is crucial if we want to analyze the notion of governmentality.
- 31 The significance of Liang Qichao’s discourse of the political economy of the ethical subject lies in the fact that it reflected the sort of discursive mode popular in late nineteenth century Japan, late Qing China as well as the early Republic. After the Meiji Restoration, discourses of ethics had been fused with the physiological ideas of the state and were dominated by biological-evolutionist theories. The Japanese Ministry of Education was strongly promoting theories of the State as a natural and organic body. One typical example that could illustrate the discursive situation was the translation of Gustav Adolph Constantin Frantz’s (佛郎都) *Physiologie der Staaten* (physiology of the State 國家生理學) into Japan in 1884. The Meiji Ministry of Education conducted the translation of this book, as in many other cases. The publication of the translation reflected the policies of Ito Hirobumi and Mori Arinori who advocated for the modernization of Japanese education system. Frantz states repeatedly in his book that the main concern of his writing was “political physiology” or “State physiology.” He treats the state as an organic body, similar to a plant or animal. If the circulation of the “fluids” within the body does not function smoothly, then the State would be weak. Furthermore, the internal organization of the State must be determined by the State’s purpose, just as the organic parts of an animal dominated by its head. The government is the principal organ charged with the task of achieving the goals of the State. (Frantz, 179-180) Frantz’s notion of the physiology of the State was translated in the book in *kanji* as *Kokutai* (國體), literary national body, and was widely circulated in the contemporary discourses that lasted through the first several decades of the twentieth century. Inoue Tetsujirō’s 1891 “Commentary on the Imperial Edict on Education,” for example, presented a physiological view of the State and a hierarchic understanding of ethics of the national subject under the service of the State. Educational principles in the ethical mode are phrased, such as: “A ruler is to his people as parents are to their children,” “A nation is like an organic body...The ruler is like the mind, the people like the body and limbs.” In

“An Outline of Citizen Morality” Inoue further argued that the state was closely linked to citizen morality. Citizen morality was an important part of the education of citizens, and education provided citizens with the fundamental ability to defend themselves and their country. The State was the organization that governs the functioning of the entire country. Inoue stressed that sovereignty was the basis of the State, and legal sovereignty lied in the rule of the imperial family. Therefore Shinto, respect for ancestors and loyalty were all used to strengthen the state. Inoue even presented a metaphor of the cellular state, explaining the importance of the loyalty of the cells: the unity of social organizations, the centre of national unity, was imperial rule; and this centre was like a body with its cells. The head was the centre of the body; the cells were all parts of the body. If the cells were not loyal, and plotted against the centre, then the body would fall ill. (Inoue 180-4) Inoue’s mode of argument is literally a reiteration of Frantz’s physiological theory of the State.

- 32 Liang Qichao’s project of the new people echoed the Japanese discursive contexts of the national body with its combination of the Hobbesian version of the physiological and contractual nation superimposed with an Adam Smithian model of national wealth and his theories of moral sentiments. Situated against the light shed by Foucault’s analysis of the political economy of the liberalist governmentality, we see more clearly how Liang Qichao’s syncretism of the above-mentioned contexts is structured. When Liang counts psyche force and the moral force as the productive labor that the individual could and should offer to the group, he also measures such qualities in terms of the interest of the nation in the name of truth. In addition to the political economy of this line of thoughts, we actually see in Liang Qichao’s discourse of the new people the converging point of both the *Political Economy* by Burton and the *Ideal Suggestion through Mental Photograph* by Henry Wood, both translated by the famous minister-translator John Fryer. Rüstow’s definition of *Vitalpolitik* perfectly illustrates the practice of bio-politics in the early modern China: a “a policy of life” with which not only the worker’s labor but also “the worker’s whole vital situation, his real, concrete situation, from morning to night and from night to morning,” as well as the “material and moral hygiene, the sense of property, the sense of social integration,” are all counted (quoted by Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*. p. 157n). John Fryer’s translation of Burton’s *Political Economy* and Henry Wood’s *Ideal Suggestion through Mental Photograph* symptomatically foregrounds the emotional demand of the age for the appropriate forms of knowledge to govern human behavior and human psyche, the former moving from the management of the market to the management of individuals’ moral behaviors, and the latter moving from the internal government of the moral hygiene and extending to that of the social hygiene. The meeting place of these two strategic movements of governmentality is the discursive knot of *xin*, psyche.

## 5. *Xin*: the knot, revisiting the crossroads of early modern China

- 33 It is at this meeting point that the images associated with the notion of the *xin*, the psyche, are threaded, in the movement of the loop (*la volte*), as Foucault said in his *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*. The images around the central nucleus (*noyau*) are the discursive practices that we analyze in the late nineteenth century China. John Fryer’s usage of *xinli* (psyche force), with an analogy of electricity, as the tamable, correctable



and utilizable forces points to the governing and the monitoring of thought that would be practiced in later governments, while his translated terms of production as *shengli* (生利) echoes the ancient text of *The Great Learning* and persuades the Chinese intellectuals the necessity of the individuals' serving the nation as human capital. Liang Qichao cleverly appropriates the term "*xinli*" introduced by John Fryer and situated this *xinli* in the ethico-political economic regime for his project of the new people and his moral enlightenment. Liang's careful deliberations of the virtues for individual's political capacities manages to involve the individual's ethical position in the frame of the society or the nation-state that allows us to discuss the connection between the question of politics and the question of ethics.

- 34 The physiological thinking of the individual's rights and responsibilities with the nation-state is exactly the opposite to *phusiologia* as discussed by Foucault in his *Hermeneutics of the Subject*. *Phusiologia* is the "knowledge of nature" (*physis*) that would enable individuals "to take pride in what is their own and not what derives from circumstances" (Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 241), and this form of knowledge is different to *paideia* or *selbstbildung*, which is the culture of self, "a cultural learning whose end is glory, the display that gives men a name," that Epicurus criticized (Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 239).
- 35 In Liang's and his contemporaries' modes of elaborations concerning the images of *xin*, along with the discourse of education and the cultivation of the self, the logic of politics and that of ethics converged on the economy of the State, that is, the count and the government of psyche. Such mode of *paideia* for the new people prescribed by Liang's circles around the *technê* of *bios* (*technê tou biou*) and the disposition of the individual's ethical life for the service of the State. We have observed analogous modes of argumentation in Dr. Sun Yatsen's (孫中山) theory of revolution that the mind of the people have to be cured and governed before the nation can be saved (*jiuguo bixian zhixin*). Chiang Kaishek, likewise, elaborated his theory of the "Law of the Heart for Revolution" (*geming xinfa*) in his program of the New Life Movement in 1934, a movement of total education and militarization of the entire nation. Mao Zedong also confessed that he was very much influenced by Tan Sitong's *Xin li Shuo* "Essay on the Psyche Force." Not only political leaders, but also the majority of the public opinions, including intellectuals, shared similar conceptions of the psyche force. Du Yaquan, to name just one example, introduced various version of ethico-political economy, including Franz's physiology of the state, throughout the time from 1900 to 1923, when he served as the chief editor of *Dongfang Zazhi*, the most popular and wide-read semi-intellectual magazine of his time. He repeatedly insists on the importance of the revolution of the *xin* (心) so that the national body (國體) can be reformed into a healthy state and that the moles in the society should be cleansed. He also advocates in his high school textbook *Philosophy of Life* that the individual in society is like the cell in an organic body, and that the continuation of the whole race is closely related with the healthy cell. The individual should move toward the practicing and realization of the idealized self and the elimination of the customary old self. We see the circulation of the ethical-political-economy of the bio-ethic-politics from the late Qing intellectuals down to the May-Fourth enlightenment movement of the modern China.
- 36 A different case at the same turning point, as I discussed in a separate paper, of the interpretation of *xinli* could be observed in Tan Sitong's (譚嗣同) writings. (Liu 2009a) In Tan's texts of *Renxue*, the book of Love, published in 1897, we see that the psyche force



defined by him is a dynamic topological continuum. The idea of psyche force as pure negativity allows each body to exist as a singular being, renewable through the force of instant appearing and disappearing of thoughts. To Tan Sitong, this constant local motion of the psyche force keeps the psyche space an open system and altered according to the encounters of the external bodies in the world. Each one is a multitude and opens to yet another multitude, as set opens to multiple subsets. The radical equality of the singular beings is suggested by this notion of such ontological multitude. Tan's psyche force as "micro-appearing-disappearing" unsettled the consolidation of the utilitarian psyche-electricity discourse of his time and challenged the nominal system of the ideological construction of Confucianism. Furthermore, through this dynamic topological perception of being, or the onto-logy, we see the possibility for the force of infinite questioning, the immanent singularity of the thought-to-come. In Tan's philosophy, we see not only a radical political view of the equality of beings, but also a radical view of the ethics that is freed from any fixed nominal ideology of ethics. However, Tan's Buddhist-inspired vision was not pursued. Instead, the road of revolution was ensued after his martyrdom through Liang Qichao's appropriation of Tan's writings. It is the biggest irony that we've observed in the eve of modern China.

- 37 Another example. Wang Guowei's (王國維) translations of the utilitarian ethics and education theory at the turn of the twentieth century revealed clearly the role that he played as an intellectual that helped instituting modern ideas. His participation both in the publication of the journal *Educational World* and later in the Ministry of Education of late Qing government fit into the plans of Luo Zhenyu (羅振玉). The impact that Wang and Luo together produced on the Chinese intellectual world was profound. Those early twentieth century theories of ethics and education became the main axis of Chinese ethical thoughts throughout the twentieth century. Wang's philosophical writings during 1904-1907, however, reached on another level. In the series of writings that he explored of the limits of Western and classical Chinese ethics, he tackled with the limitations of dualism. Wang Guowei criticized the intellectuals such as Liang Qichao who clung to utilitarian and political purposes so that they cannot practice philosophical thinking. He criticized utilitarianism and *shengsheng zhuyi* (life-ism 生生主義) that were popular at his time, especially the ones advocated by Liang Qichao. As an alternative, he developed a notion of *wusheng zhuyi* (no-life-ism 無生主義). Life-ism to Wang Guowei is the continuous expansion and preservation of life, while no-life-ism is the subtraction of personal subjective will of life. No-life-ism is not a negative or pessimistic account of humanity. Through retreating from the position of the subject that submits to the utilitarian and teleological purposes of politics, the subject could obtain a clearer state of mind. Wang's contemporaries did not follow the path of his philosophical thought either. (Liu 2009b)
- 38 Liang Qichao, the activist of the revolution and the enlightenment in favor of a modern China, situated himself in an engaging and intervening position as an active subject. His teachings educated a whole generation of modern Chinese subjects, including the May 4 activists. Tan Sitong and Wang Guowei also belonged to this topological knot of the age, but they respectively proposed their different views of the psyche and ethics that was a move subtracted and deviated from the utilitarian count of psyche. Such paths, however, were not taken because the revolution was on the wave.

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